

AFFORDABLE HOUSING COMMITTEE

The goal of the Affordable Housing Committee is two-fold: to meet the state's mandate that 10% of the town's housing stock be affordable to low and moderate income households and to attempt to provide a diversification in housing opportunities in the Town of Westford. Once again, 2007 was a year of study, analysis, challenge, and success for the Committee. The following are the major projects and/or achievements that were considered and completed by our committee.

Projects

The Affordable Housing Committee used the final report of the Land Acquisition Study Committee as its basis for selecting parcels of vacant land which could be utilized for the construction of affordable housing. Those selected parcels were as follows: a 40-acre parcel of vacant land on the corner of Forrest and Tyngsboro Roads, a 17.74 acre parcel on Boston Road, and a 2.34 acre parcel on Williams Avenue. Following is a brief review of the status of the Committee's deliberations on these various parcels.

Forrest Road/Tyngsboro Road Parcel: This parcel has been extensively reviewed by the AHC. Discussion on the various options that might exist for the property have been ongoing, with town staff providing valuable input based on their expertise in land use, planning, conservation issues, etc. In order to gather as much information as was necessary in order to determine the feasibility of construction on this parcel, the civil engineering firm of Landtech Consultants, Inc. was hired to prepare a Supplemental Data Report, providing the Committee such information as site description, topographic features, drainage patterns, etc. This report was presented to the Affordable Housing Committee in January, 2007. Natural Heritage has also provided information pertaining to this property and is, in fact, continuing to do so.

Boston Road Parcel: This parcel of vacant land was selected as a priority site for possible affordable housing construction. Once again, Landtech Consultants, Inc. was hired to prepare a Supplemental Data Report providing the AHC with information concerning this parcel, much like that which was presented for the Forrest Road/Tyngsboro Road property. Upon receipt and review of this report, the Affordable Housing Committee requested additional studies on this parcel, resulting in a Draft Site Assessment and Development Options Report which was prepared by Northern Middlesex Council of Government (NMCOG). Once these two reports were received, reviewed, and analyzed, the Affordable Housing Committee met with the Board of Selectmen to present the findings of these reports. Upon their review of these reports, after subsequent questions and concerns were addressed, and after hearing from abutters to the parcel, the Board of Selectmen then authorized the Town Manager to prepare a Request for Proposals (RFP) to be utilized for potential development planning for this site.

Williams Avenue: This 2.34 acre parcel of vacant land located in the Nabnasset section of the Town of Westford has been an on-going project of the Affordable Housing Committee. Consideration of and deliberation on this property actually began in early 2006, with the abutters of this parcel invited to participate in these discussions. The AHC had contacted the Lowell chapter of Habitat for Humanity in an effort to partner with that group in order to develop a truly affordable home on the Williams Avenue site. Once again studies were conducted on this property. The civil engineering and environmental consultant firm of David E. Ross Associates completed the wetland delineation and soil prob testing in order to determine the development feasibility of this parcel. This study determined that "development of the Williams Avenue parcel in accordance with town and state regulations and following general engineering practices would not have any adverse impacts on abutting properties." As a result of this study, the AHC and Habitat for Humanity subsequently determined that the

Diane Holmes
Chair
Scott Hazelton
Vice-chair

Bruce Caldwell
Ann Eno
Mary Lynn Galgano
Jim Silva

Non-voting members:
Chris Pude
*Director of the Westford
Housing Authority*
Ross Altobelli
Town Planner

highest and best use of this property should be to allow for the construction of one single-family home. Since this parcel had been acquired by the Town of Westford as the result of the tax-taking process, the Tax Possession Sale Committee (TPSC) was brought into the discussions as it was their duty to determine the final disposition of this parcel. Upon their review of the AHC/Habitat proposal for this property, the TPSC eventually voted to recommend the transfer of this property to Habitat for Humanity. This transfer is now in process and is currently at the purchase and sale stage of property conveyance.

Reviews

- The Affordable Housing Committee appointed a representative to serve on a study committee to review proposed plans submitted for a condominium project known as Graniteville Woods.
- The Affordable Housing Committee provided its input on Jefferson at Westford (which is being proposed off Littleton Road) at the Zoning Board of Appeals meeting in May, 2007.

Financing the Preservation of Affordable Housing

In conjunction with the Westford Housing Authority and the Affordable Housing Trust, the AHC continued its attempt to preserve and/or regain affordable units at Haystack Estates and Keyes Corner. The Affordable Housing Committee is committed not only to creating additional affordable housing, but also to preserving that which already exists.

Affordable Housing Committee Membership

Calendar year 2007 brought about changes to the Committee's membership. Longtime member and passionate supporter of affordable housing Elaine Nickerson announced her resignation from the Committee in October. Elaine's significant knowledge of the process involved in the creation and preservation of affordable housing will certainly be missed. However, more importantly, Elaine's ability to focus on the big picture and to see a project through to its completion will be difficult, if at all possible, to replace. The Affordable Housing Committee thanks her for her many years of service and wishes her well in her future endeavors.